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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 002665

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR CROCKER'S AUGUST 7 MEETING WITH HUMAN
RIGHTS MINISTER

REF: BAGHDAD 2608

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (S) SUMMARY: During an August 7 meeting with Ambassador Crocker, Human Rights Minister Wijdan Salim sought his advice on how to respond to Iraqiyya bloc leader Ayad Allawi's order for Iraqiyya ministers to resign from the Maliki government. Minister Wijdan said that she does not want to resign, but disobeying Allawi is hard. Commenting on the reactions of the other Iraqiyya ministers to Allawi's order, she assessed Communication Minister Mohammed Tawfiq Allawi would obey it, Science and Technology Minister Raid Jahid Fahmi would disregard it, and Minister Without Portfolio Mohammed Abass al-Uraybi was undecided. She stated she will draft a response to Allawi and share it with the Ambassador. Minister Wijdan noted that if she resigns, she would need to leave Iraq; however, if she remains, she would be concerned for her family's safety. She said other political parties, especially the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI), are seeking control over her ministry. Ambassador Crocker told the Minister the decision is hers, but he hopes she will not resign. He also offered to have Post staff discuss visa options for the Minister's family. END SUMMARY.

HUMAN RIGHTS MINISTER UNDECIDED ON WHETHER TO RESIGN

¶2. (S) Human Right Minister Wijdan Salim informed Ambassador Crocker during an August 7 meeting that she was uncertain how to respond to Iraqiyya bloc leader Ayad Allawi's August 5 order to resign from the Maliki government. The Minister said she does not want to resign and asked the Ambassador for advice on how to say "no" to Allawi. She stated she will take time to consider her answer to Allawi, draft a response letter to him, and share it with Ambassador Crocker on August ¶11.

¶3. (S) Minister Wijdan said that thus far, she only informed Allawi, who communicated his order via email, that she would refrain from attending the Council of Ministers (CoM) meeting on August 6. Allawi has since inquired whether she would attend the next CoM meeting on August 14, she said. Minister Wijdan confided that because she respects Allawi, it is hard to disobey him and therefore, she is confused. The Ambassador told Minister Wijdan that although he hopes she will not resign, the decision is hers.

¶4. (S) Minister Wijdan said that Deputy Prime Minister (PM) Barham Salih and PM Maliki's Chief of Staff Tariq Abdullah both contacted her after Allawi's order became public. The Minister reported that Deputy PM Salih told her that he hopes the problem will be resolved, but did not offer advice, while CoS Abdullah contacted her to arrange a meeting between them. She commented that she wished that her ministry were able to operate free from the politics of the situation. Shelamented

that everyday in her ministry, which is filled with young employees, someone tells her if she leaves, they will leave. The Ambassador suggested to the Minister that she could make clear that she is executing her duties for the sake of her nation and its people, and not because of the government.

MINISTER WIJDAN DISCUSSES HER OPTIONS

15. (S) Minister Wijdan said that if she resigns, she cannot stay in Iraq; however, if she remains, she would be concerned for her family's safety. She said that because her ministry deals with detention issues, she sometimes has problems with the Jaysh Al-Mahdi (JAM) militia, which has sent her letters. She also stated that people supporting the Mujahedin-e-Khalq (MEK) have called her several times at home and the ministry to advocate the MEK agenda using a "strong tone" with her. She expressed concern that she does not have enough security for her children and noting that the majority of her family lives in the U.S., asked the Ambassador about U.S. visa opportunities for her three children. The Ambassador offered to have Embassy staff discuss the options with the Minister.

ALLAWI AND OTHER IRAQIYYA MINISTERS

16. (S) Minister Wijdan told the Ambassador that although she respects Allawi, she believes he made a big mistake by not returning to Baghdad to participate in the government. She assessed that Communication Minister Mohammed Tawfiq Allawi, who is Allawi's cousin would obey Allawi's order to resign, Science and Technology Minister Raid Jahid Fahmi would disregard it, and Minister Without Portfolio Mohammed Abass al-Uraybi was still undecided. She said that her attempts to phone Communication Minister Allawi had been unsuccessful and that she did not want to join with Science and Technology

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Minister Fahmi in a response to Allawi.

POLITICAL JOCKEYING AND THE MOHR

17. (S) Minister Wijdan commented that while none of the other parties wanted the Ministry of Human Rights (MoHR) initially and Iraqiyya tried to give it away, every political party is now "quarreling" to take it. She said that ISCI was particularly assertive, with Badr Organization Chief Hadi Al-Amiri directly involved in placing Hossain al-Zohairi, whom she did not request, as a deputy minister for MoHR. The Minister explained that she received two letters from ISCI leader Abdul Aziz al-Hakim recommending al-Zohairi as an "advisor" for MoHR. She said that PM Maliki subsequently sent her a letter stating that Abdulaziz al-Hakim informed him al-Zohairi would be her "deputy minister" and she saw a letter with the PM's signature approving his appointment. Minister Wijdan said that ISCI was able to obtain "acting deputy minister" status for al-Zohairi, whose appointment has not been confirmed by the Council of Representatives, as required by law. She said that she will be getting another deputy minister from the Tawafuq bloc, and when he arrives, she will "cancel" al-Zohairi's authority, which he has begun asserting inappropriately. Minister complained that "one week they are talking about canceling the ministry, and the next week they are giving me more staff."

18. (S) Minister Wijdan also said that the MoHR building does not belong to the ministry, but rather to the ISCI-affiliated Badr Organization. Without identifying the source, she said that she was informed she needed to write ISCI to ask for the MoHR building; however, she then received a letter saying MoHR cannot have the building. The Minister noted there was some pressure for her to meet Abdul Aziz al-Hakim and the Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani to appeal for their support directly on this issue as well as repealing Law 105 of 1970 prohibiting the Baha'i faith, so that the Baha'is' membership in the Non-Muslim Endowment -- which the PM rejected as illegal -- might be considered. She commented, "I do not want to go to the marjariya."

¶9. (S) Commenting on Shi'a parties, the Minister said she has received invitations from Sadrists to go to Basrah and meet them and has good relations with Fadhila. Turning to the Sunnis, she complained that anything she does for them "is not good enough." She said that she provides the same human rights reports to prominent Sunnis such as Vice President Tariq Al-Hashimi, Deputy PM Salam Zowbaie (who has resigned), and Speaker of Parliament Mahmoud al-Mashadani, but they do not share the information with each other.

PROPOSAL TO INTRODUCE IRANIAN RED CRESCENT

¶10. (S) Minister Wijdan also added that in her capacity as the Minister of State for Civil Society, she has received several letters, including from the PM's Office and Ministry of Health, seeking her opinion about possibly allowing an Iranian Red Crescent Office to open in Iraq. Minister Wijdan said she did not see the need to introduce the Iranian Red Crescent into Iraq when there is already an Iraqi Red Crescent. She further lamented that people do not understand the procedures, because introducing the Iranian Red Crescent would require a treaty agreement, and such requests need to be channeled through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs first.
CROCKER